



50 idioms

For IELTS Speaking



Set 1

Common Idioms	Definitions
It cost me an arm and a leg to take my trip to Australia.	<i>Very expensive</i>
I was over the moon when he asked me to marry him.	<i>Extremely pleased or happy</i>
You are taking your IELTS test next week?? Aren't you jumping the gun . You've only just started studying.	<i>Doing or starting something too early</i>
He comes round to see me once in a blue moon .	<i>Happening very rarely</i>
He's got a chip on his shoulder .	<i>Feeling inferior or having a grievance about something</i>
I reckon getting a band 7 in IELTS will be a piece of cake ! I'm very good at English.	<i>Very easy</i>
The money sent by comic relief to help poverty in Africa is just a drop in the ocean . They need far more than this.	<i>A very small part of something much bigger</i>
Getting a low score the first time I took IELTS was a blessing in disguise . It forced me to study extremely hard so I got a much better score the next time.	<i>Something positive that isn't recognized until later</i>
We have to actually do something about global warming. Actions speak louder than words .	<i>It's better to actually do something rather than just talking about it</i>
I bumped into Jenny in town the other day. It's a small world .	<i>Meeting someone you would not have expected to</i>

Set 2

Common Idioms	Definitions
Oh well, I got 5.5 in IELTS again. Back to the drawing board!	<i>When an attempt to do something fails and it's time to start all over again using different methods</i>
I hate my job so much I can't bare going to work, but if I quit I don't think I can get another job. I'm really stuck / caught between a rock and a hard place.	<i>Having two very bad choices.</i> <i>(note: stuck/caught can be omitted)</i>
I have to bite my tongue so I don't say what I really think of him!	<i>Wanting to say something but stopping yourself.</i>
Come on, cut to the chase . We haven't got all day!	<i>Leave out all the unnecessary details and just get to the point</i>
Are you putting all of your savings into that company? Don't put all your eggs in one basket.	<i>Putting all of ones resources into one possibility</i>
Try not to worry about it. Every cloud has a silver lining.	<i>Believing that every bad situation has a positive side / eventually leads to something good</i>
It was difficult when I moved to another country but I eventually found my feet.	<i>To become comfortable in what you are doing</i>
My parents are very fixed in their ways . They won't start using the internet.	<i>Not wanting to change from the normal ways of doing things</i>
I think he got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning . He is in a terrible mood.	<i>To refer to someone who is having a bad day</i>
My mother will always go the extra mile to help people.	<i>Doing much more than is required when doing something</i>

Set 3

Common Idioms	Definitions
I think you've hit the nail on the head . That's the reason he didn't get the job.	Say exactly the right thing
Today's going so badly. If it's not one thing, it's the other .	When everything seems to be going wrong
I just said it in the heat of the moment . I was angry. I know I shouldn't have.	Saying or doing something suddenly without thinking about it
Keep an eye on him . I think he may cheat in the exam.	Watch someone or something carefully
Have you heard? John down the road has kicked the bucket .	Died
I don't want to argue with him again. It's better to let sleeping dogs lie .	Avoid a conflict
I told him what gift you have bought him for his birthday. Sorry, I didn't mean to let the cat out of the bag .	Tell someone something that you were not supposed to
Don't tell her what you really think of her if she's helping you with your English! Don't bite the hand that feeds you .	Hurt or upset someone who is helping you
I'm not sure which party he is going to vote for. He's sitting on the fence .	Not making a firm decision between different choices
Everything she does is very over the top . She can't just have a few drinks – she has to get really drunk.	Excessive

Set 4

Common Idioms	Definitions
Let's keep studying for IELTS. Practice makes perfect.	<i>Continuously doing something to improve</i>
Don't get upset about what he said. He's just pulling your leg.	<i>Joking around</i>
Sorry but I think I'll take a rain check on that.	<i>To decline an offer that you will take up later</i>
As a rule of thumb , I don't study at weekends. I spend the time with my family.	<i>Principal that is strictly adhered / kept to</i>
I can smell a rat . He said he has a PhD but he can't even remember which university he studied at.	<i>To sense that something is not right</i>
She's the spitting image of her mother.	<i>To look exactly like someone else</i>
The ball's in your court now. What are you going to do?	<i>Telling someone it's now their turn to make a decision</i>
Unfortunately I think he'll be studying for IELTS until the cows come home . His English is very poor.	<i>For a very long time</i>
It was all tongue-in-cheek . He didn't really mean what he said.	<i>Something said in humour rather than seriously</i>
She's feeling under the weather today so she won't be going to work.	<i>Unwell</i>

Set 5

Common Idioms	Definitions
We've had some big disagreements over the years, but it's all water under the bridge now. We get on fine.	<i>Things from the past that are not important anymore</i>
You are what you eat so it's better to have a healthy diet.	<i>If you eat bad food, you'll be unhealthy, if you eat good food, you'll be healthy</i>
You can't judge a book by its cover. I need to get to know him before I decide what he is like.	<i>The belief that outside appearances do not reveal what someone or something is really like</i>
We're really working against the clock now. We must hurry.	<i>Not having enough time to do something</i>
Why are we bothering? We're flogging a dead horse . Our online business is making no money, so we should move on and do something else.	<i>Attempting to continue with something that is finished / over</i>
I bent over backwards to help him. I hope he appreciates it.	<i>Doing all you can to help someone</i>
So you have the IELTS test today?? Break a leg .	<i>Good luck</i>
Ok, I'm playing devil's advocate here, but if marijuana is legalized, isn't it more likely young people will smoke it?	<i>To put forward a side in an argument that may not be your own in order to show the counter-argument / ensure all sides are discussed</i>
Hold your horses! We haven't won anything yet.	<i>Telling someone who is getting ahead of themselves to wait / be patient</i>
She is driving me up the wall . She won't stop talking.	<i>Annoying or irritating somebody</i>